

The Plans of John Brown.

Gerit Smith writes a long letter, in which he denies that he knew anything of John Brown's invasion scheme. He also relates some interesting circumstances in regard to that old hero. Mr. Smith says:

John Brown talked to me—but he never consulted with me—respecting his plans for freeing slaves. Then, too, for reasons, which he mentioned to some of his friends, he did not feel as free to tell me, as he did to tell others, the details of these plans. But I learned enough of them to believe that, in addition to his former ways of helping off slaves, he meant to go into a mountain or mountains of a slave State, and invite slaves to flee to him, and to give them arms to resist attempts at their recapture. I confess that, with all my leanings to "nonresistance," I did not object to this use of arms.

Brown left Peterboro April 14, 1859, and never returned to it. I never saw him again, and never again had I any communication with him, direct or indirect, touching his plans or movements. His only letter to me after that time was a few lines respecting his inability to obtain the payment of a note I had given him. This note for \$250 was against one of his old friends and fellow-laborers in Kansas. For months after I received that letter, I was at a loss to know where he was. When he left Peterboro, he had not yet decided whether to go into an Eastern or a Western Slave State.

I think it was in August that I learned, in some indirect way—perhaps from mere rumor—that Brown was in Chambersburg. In a similar way I learned, only a very few weeks, perhaps only a very few days, before his descent upon Harper's Ferry, that Brown had gone into a slave State. I well remember looking into an atlas to see what mountain or mountains he had probably gone to. I hoped that the next news would be the welcome one of a stampede of slaves. But, instead of that, it was the painful news of the Harper's Ferry affair. I had not myself the slightest knowledge or intimation of Brown's intended invasion of Harper's Ferry; and when I saw that George L. Stearns, of Boston, testified before the Senate Committee that he too knew nothing of that intended invasion, I questioned whether a single person in all the North knew anything of it. Indeed, not one person testified before the Committee that he knew aught of the intended invasion. Nor was this universal ignorance in the matter in the least degree strange, for it turns out that it was only a very few weeks before his descent upon Harper's Ferry that Brown had decided upon it. By the way, Brown himself, as he was reported, expressed deep regret at this change in his plans.

Let me say that I cast no blame on any one for supposing that I had a full knowledge of Brown's plans and his changes in them. That I had it, I admit, a not very unreasonable inference from the intimate relations both of business and friendship existing between us. Nevertheless, so it is, that I had but a partial knowledge of these plans, and not the least knowledge of his exchanging or abandoning them for others. Right here, too, let me say that I do not feel myself at all dishonored by the coupling of my name with any of Brown's endeavors for the liberation of the slave. Even where truth forbids the coupling, regard for my reputation does not forbid it. The more the public identifies me with John Brown, the more it honors me.

Slave Stampedes on the Southern Borderlands